

Director's report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission  
presented by Jeffrey Koenings, Ph.D., WDFW Director  
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#### A Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife

We serve Washington's citizens by protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats, while providing sustainable fish and wildlife-related recreational and commercial opportunities.

#### GOAL I: HEALTHY AND DIVERSE FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS DEVELOP, INTEGRATE AND DISSEMINATE SOUND FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITAT SCIENCE.

Lead Poisoning of Trumpeter Swans: The University of Washington's (U.W.) capture crew reports that all trumpeter collars have been mounted and the trapping phase is complete. Totals are as follows: Trumpeters - 105 tagged this year (96 VFH, 6 satellites, 3 neck collars, but no radios); Tundras - 22 tagged (neck collars, but no radios). The U.W. crew will now help with the monitoring. A total of 164 Trumpeters have been sighted in our study area, of which 59 were birds collared in previous years and have returned to the area. Most swans continue to be routinely sighted in our core study area. A total of 26 Tundras have been sighted in our study area, of which 4 were birds collared in previous years and have returned to the area.

Biologist Davison met with the swan carcass recovery team, Ann Henry, and Don Kruse and visited the major night roosts in Whatcom County for sick and dead swans. Overall the number of sick swans at night roosts has been relatively low. The swan lead poisoning die-off appears to be later than usual as mortality typically peaks this week. To date, 4 radio-collared swans have died. One mortality is suspected to be from lead exposure; the carcass was intact when collected, so we will be able to confirm cause of death. Two trumpeters may have died of trap-related injuries; one was heavily scavenged so we won't be able to determine cause of death. A collared trumpeter mortality was collected this week from Lake 16 in the Skagit - it had never been sighted in our study area. It too was heavily scavenged so no cause of death will be determined.

Mountain Quail: Wildlife Program and the Department of Corrections staff transferred 101 mountain quail from Roseburg, Oregon to holding pens (not cells) in Connell, Washington on December 22. These quail are part of the mountain quail reintroduction project in Asotin County and will be released on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area in mid-March 2005. A significant number of these birds will be fitted with radio transmitters as part of a graduate student project designed to collect habitat use information, document survival, and develop recommendations for future management activities.

Dogfish Shark Conference June 2005: WDFW in conjunction with the Puget Sound Action Team, the UW, and the Canadian Dept of Fish and Oceans is hosting an international workshop on the biology and management of dogfish sharks. Dogfish are the most abundance species of shark in the world and subject to major commercial fisheries. Signs of stock failure are evident in many other areas. This

conference will be a rare opportunity for managers and scientists to meet on this species. We expect a wide attendance from Asia, Europe and Central America as well as both coasts of the U.S. and Canada. The conference is June 13th -15th at the UW. Our web page will be used as the main method of registration and communications. Note-- we have grants and registration fees to cover the costs of the conference and there is no use of state funds other than a little staff time to prepare and organize it.

Emphasis Patrols: Detachment 16 (Grant County) implemented a joint weekend waterfowl emphasis patrol in conjunction with Detachment 19 (Franklin County) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to cover North Franklin, West Adams, and South Grant Counties. The 3-day emphasis patrol resulted in 15 arrests and numerous warnings. The majority of clubs contacted received literature and other information on regulations pertaining to baiting, possession, and tagging requirements. Emphasis patrols for Cougar pilot hound hunting, commercial crab, and razor clams were conducted the week of January 10, 2005. Numerous contacts and arrests were made.

Vessel Seized: Officers seized a commercial crabbing vessel in Everett and booked the skipper into jail for four felony counts (possession/use of another person's commercial license and commercial fishing without a license). When Officers took possession of the vessel, they found a bag of undersized crab hidden in the boat's bow. Additional charges will be filed for those violations.

Central Puget Sound Low Flows Survey: We are in the process of distributing the final report (Central Puget Sound Low Flow Survey, prepared for WDFW by John Lombard [Steward and Associates], and Dave Somers [Dave Somers Consulting], 11/30/2004) from this survey. The survey was contracted by Intergovernmental and Habitat Programs, and provides for an initial collation and assessment of the scattered, inconsistent, and generally sparse low flows and fish effects information in central Puget Sound basins. Existing published and gray literature is supplemented in the report by interviews with area fish and water professionals (including several WDFW staff). It provides for an initial determination of streams where man-caused low flow problems for fish are currently known to occur, outlines the likely causes, and assesses what steps might be taken to begin to develop solutions. Thanks are due to members of the interagency oversight group for their work on this project (Carl Samuelson, IRM; Hal Beecher, Habitat; Gary Engman, Habitat; and Steve Hirschey, Ecology Water Resources) and to the several WDFW staff and others cited in the report. Thanks are also due to Vicki Loebe, IS for providing an initial one hundred CD-ROM copies for distribution (at a savings of several hundred dollars and considerable paper ~25,000 sheets!).

#### PROTECT, RESTORE, AND ENHANCE FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND THEIR HABITATS.

Sunset Falls Trap and Haul 2004 Results: Seasonal operations came to a close at the Sunset Falls Trap and Haul Fishway marking the 47th year of operation. Completed in 1958, the fishway affords salmon, steelhead, and native char access to over 90 miles of high quality habitat upstream of two natural barriers on the SF Skykomish River. Over 20% of the wild coho production in the Snohomish River watershed is estimated to originate from the fish passed upstream of Sunset Falls. In summary, 43,523 salmon, steelhead and native char were transported, representing the fourth largest return of fish to the

facility in 47 years. 40,704 coho were transported, representing the third highest return recorded. 399 chinook were transported, approximately two-thirds of the historic average. 1,158 steelhead were transported, approximately 50% higher than the historic average, but substantially lower than in some recent years. 599 chum were transported, representing the largest return recorded, and 128 native char were transported, representing the largest return recorded.

**Snyder Canyon Fish Passage:** The Snyder Canyon Creek Mill site fish passage project was completed by WDFW's Technical Applications Division and Business Services Division. Located in Klickitat County, this was a large project that took years of planning and construction to accomplish. The project turned out to be more expensive than anticipated in early stages of planning, but it opened 3.9 miles of excellent habitat for coho, resident salmonids, and ESA-listed mid-Columbia steelhead.

WDFW partnered with Klickitat County, the Yakama Tribe, and Mid Columbia Regional Enhancement Group to secure funding to accomplish the work. Four fish passage barriers were corrected in tandem to provide adequate fish passage in lower Snyder Canyon Creek. The installation of 124 weirs in the 2,300-foot (700 meters) long mill flume was first, followed by demolition of the mill dam and regrading the fore bay sediment. Finally, two private barrier culverts upstream were replaced with bridges. As much as possible, local vendors were used for equipment and materials. WDFW hired two temporary workers from Goldendale to help with construction.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area Habitat Restoration:** WDFW's Technical Applications Division fish passage barrier correction and stream restoration work on the LT Murray Wildlife Area was completed for the 2004 construction season in November. Approximately 8 miles of stream-adjacent roads were abandoned on the North Fork Manastash watershed, which was heavily roaded and logged prior to acquisition by WDFW.

The project included the placement of nearly 200 pieces of large woody debris as constructed log jams to promote stream channel complexity, and the removal of seven fish passage barrier culverts, which restored access to approximately 1.7 miles of fish habitat. In addition, eleven culverts were removed from road crossings on non-fish bearing tributary streams. The project was a successful, coordinated effort involving the Department of Natural Resources, the LT Murray Wildlife Area Manager, Region 3 staff involved in RMAP implementation, and Business Services Division engineering and construction crews. Fish passage and habitat restoration work on the LT Murray Wildlife Area will continue during the 2005 construction season.

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area Fish Passage:** TAPPS fish passage barrier correction work on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area was completed for the 2004 construction season in October. WDFW crews removed a fish passage barrier culvert on the Wendell-Phillips Canal (DID 7), thereby restoring access from the mainstem Yakima River to more than 5,000 square meters of off-channel rearing habitat. This project was a coordinated effort involving the Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager, Region 3 Fish Program, and Business Services engineering and construction crews.

Methow Valley Irrigation District Fish Screens: After 14 years of discussions, litigation, and negotiations, the Methow Valley Irrigation District (MVID) will begin the 2005 irrigation season with new state-of-the-art fish protection facilities at the MVID East and West canals. This project completes the screening of the last remaining large gravity diversions in the Methow River Basin in Okanogan County. The design, fabrication, and construction of these facilities was a collaborative effort between the MVID irrigators, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), and WDFW. The design of these facilities features conventional rotary drum screens on the West Canal, and vertical traveling belt screens on the East Canal. Construction was started during the 2004 irrigation season necessitating temporary screens at both sites. These two facilities were designed and constructed with the capability of providing a range of flows from 10 cubic feet per second (cfs) up to 30 cfs. The West canal design included an adult passage facility that will be maintained throughout the non-irrigation season for off-channel rearing. WDFW's Business Services Program's Yakima Construction Shop (YCS) fabricated and installed the screens, gantry, bypass control gates and miscellaneous metal work. Agency funding was provided through a contract with Department of Ecology. BPA provided the balance of funding for this project (\$1,100,000).

Wild Coho Recovery Program: A program started in 1998 to recover the wild coho population in Snow Creek near Discovery Bay is showing great promise. So far this season, ~1800+ wild coho have returned to Snow Creek with ~1000 fish during the last week as rains swelled the stream. During 1998 through 2000, the total return was <100 fish each year and nearly all of the wild fish were needed and used as broodstock for the recovery program. In 2001, enough coho adults returned from the program releases to provide the egg take needs for the program and to have ~500 coho spawn naturally. Those naturally spawning adults are contributing to the return this year. Decoding of otoliths collected from adults this season will help us estimate the success of natural spawning in 2001. We did not take broodstock during 2004 so the run is now "on its own" - - but it's looking good!

Olympia Oyster Restoration: WDFW intertidal bivalve management employees attended the yearly meeting of the Olympia Oyster Advisory Group to review the progress of restoration efforts spearheaded by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund. Agency representatives reported on their visits to 49 public beaches in Puget Sound and Hood Canal, and the fact Olympia oysters were found on all but one of those beaches. WDFW staff also presented the results of a visit to the agency's tidelands in Liberty Bay, near Poulsbo, where Olympia oysters have been found wherever Pacific oyster shell is present. WDFW, along with the Suquamish Tribe and the Puget Sound Restoration Fund, will place additional oyster shell on the tidelands next spring in an attempt to increase the Olympia oyster population. Restoration efforts by the Puget Sound Restoration Fund mostly involve Olympia oyster seeding on private tidelands. Central Shellfish staff presented new rules on oyster seed imports and shell transfer, and summarized concerns about the spread of Denman Island Disease. A draft Sea Grant publication on Olympia oyster seeding was also reviewed.

ENSURE WDFW ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS, FACILITIES, AND LANDS ARE CONSISTENT WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS THAT PROTECT AND RECOVER FISH, WILDLIFE, AND THEIR HABITATS.

Centralia Game Farm: The pheasants at the Centralia Game Farm were diagnosed with *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* (MG). This bacterial infection is an avian disease (primarily poultry and other fowl) and does not infect other animals or humans. Since birds that have contracted MG cannot be cured, the game farm has been depopulated and will undergo a disinfecting process over the next several months. Staff has been working with Briggs Hall (WDFW veterinarian), the state veterinarian from the Department of Agriculture, as well as local health officials to properly handle the situation.

IAFWA Conservation Education Summit: The first IAFWA Summit on Conservation Education was held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown WV, December 7-9, 2004. Attending for WDFW were Bonnie Long, Mike O'Malley, and Margaret Tudor. This by-invitation-only event brought together 220 stakeholders including 22 state fish and wildlife agency directors, key conservation education administrators of state fish and wildlife agencies, USFWS representatives, international representatives, and NGO executives. The purpose of the gathering was to chart a strategic course for the future of conservation education in state fish and wildlife agencies. This groundbreaking event culminated in passage of a Resolution of Support for Conservation Education by the IAFWA Executive Committee. The resolution accepts the Agenda for Conservation Education in State Fish and Wildlife Agencies crafted by attendees and requests the Directors of the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies, the Chairs of the state Fish and Wildlife Commissions and Boards, the Governors of each state, and the state agency Information and Education Chiefs to review and comment on the Summit-developed proposed strategies. Further, the resolution instructs the Chair of the IAFWA Education, Outreach and Diversity Committee to convene the Committee at the upcoming North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference to develop a national conservation education strategy for consideration at the Business meeting of the IAFWA.

#### INFLUENCE THE DECISIONS OF OTHERS THAT AFFECT FISH, WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITATS.

Oil Spill Team to participate in Ecological Risk Assessment: The Coast Guard, federal and state agency representatives, local governments, and tribal representatives will gather in Pt. Angeles for the first of two, three-day workshops assessing ecological risk relative to in-situ burning and the use of dispersants on oil spills in Washington's near-shore coastal waters. The first workshop will be held January 19th - 21st and the second, February 15th - 17th. The agency's Oil Spill Team will provide important information to this forum on Washington's fish and wildlife resources, and we will participate as resource advocates in the workshops as well. Forums like this provide important opportunities to discover the pitfalls and challenges to oil spill response activities that would occur during a real spill, and they offer important relationship-building opportunities. (Major Projects)

Water Resources Funding Task Force: The Water Resources Funding Task Force (TF) completed its meeting schedule and released its final report to the legislature. The TF was formed by a 2004 capital budget proviso and charged with developing recommendations for funding alternatives to support state water resource programs. The TF included agency, interest groups, and tribal representation. WDFW was represented by IRM. Staff provided testimony to the House Agriculture & Natural Resource Committee on December 3. Our emphasis in TF participation was to define and provide recognition of

the role (and funding needs) that WDFW has in supporting the state's water resources programs, especially in the areas of stream flow science and FERC licensing. While agencies (Ecology, WDFW, and Health) were successful in defining roles and funding needs, specific water user groups (e.g. agriculture, business, irrigators, hydro power), as expected, were not willing to discuss alternative funding options (including annual water usage fees) that might assess their clients. Additional information and the TF report to the legislature can be found at the UW Policy Consensus Center's website at <http://depts.washington.edu/wsuuwpcc/fundingtf/index.php>.

Instream Flow Rule Consultation: Draft instream flow rules have been filed by Ecology for the Stillaguamish and Samish systems and a modification of the existing rule (in response to litigation) is being proposed for the Skagit R. Ecology is required to formally consult with agencies (WDFW, Health, CTED, Agriculture) during the instream flow rule making process. That consultation was held in Bellevue on December 6.

For WDFW and Ecology this was a formality, as our staff have been and continue to work very closely together on developing flow recommendations. One of the critical challenges to moving these processes forward is developing rules that provide for fish flow regimes but also allow for at least some defined set aside of water for development (including for exempt wells).

#### MINIMIZE ADVERSE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND WILDLIFE.

Update - Pilot Cougar Season With the Aid of Dogs: The cougar hunt hunting season has been underway for a month in five Northeastern counties. As of January 3, three of the four hunt zones remain open for pursuit or harvest of cougar. The Okanogan hunt zone is now closed for the harvest of cougar; however, permit hunters for that area may continue in a pursuit-only season until March 31. As of January 3, the harvest levels are as follows:

Chelan hunt zone - 2/4 females or 3/10 total cougar have been harvested

Okanogan hunt zone - 11/11 females or 25/28 total cougar have been harvested (closed by female sub-quota)

Ferry-Okanogan hunt zone - 6/10 females or 8/28 total cougar have been harvested

Stevens-Pend Oreille hunt zone - 8/15 females or 17/38 total cougar have been harvested.

Elk Depredation: Region Three Enforcement staff has issued about 100 landowner permits for harvesting elk to reduce depredation in Kittitas, Yakima and Benton Counties. At this point in time about fifty elk have been harvested. Forty-six are antler less and the other four are branch antlered bulls. We have appreciated landowner's willingness to focus harvest primarily on antler less animals. This is particularly important in the area around Hanford where the herd continues to grow far beyond WDFW herd objectives.

In the first week of January WDFW and US Fish and Wildlife biologists conducted an aerial survey of the Hanford herd. The herd has grown to about 700 animals. After calving we will be back at herd levels equal to pre roundup and pre fire levels of five years ago (over 800 animals). This number is about double the herd objective.

The Hanford Federal Advisory committee has unanimously endorsed active management of elk on the Monument. Management actions recommended included special hunting permits to harvest animals on the monument. This is a breakthrough as some environmental representatives on the advisory committee had been very resistant to any hunting on the ALE portion of the monument. The new extension to the West Valley elk fence appears to have resolved winter elk depredation in orchard west of Yakima.

GOAL II: SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES  
PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISH AND WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL  
OPPORTUNITIES COMPATIBLE WITH MAINTAINING HEALTHY FISH AND WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND  
HABITATS.

Watchable Wildlife: A high number of common Egrets have been observed in the Woodland and Morgan farms recently. Groups of 25+ have been feeding in the fields in Woodland and roosting in the trees along Gee Creek on the Morgan Farm. Egrets are common winter visitors, but a group of this size is unusual. Seeing 25 large white birds in trees was also a bit unusual.

A redwing, or Eurasian thrush, is spending the winter on Olympia's Westside, to the delight of many birders from around the country. This is the first recorded instance of this species in western North America, attracting bird watching enthusiasts wishing to add this species to their life list. On any given day, 70 or more birders scan the holly trees in this older neighborhood, hoping to catch a glimpse or perhaps photograph this species that normally winters in southern Europe. This event is attracting extensive media coverage, with several articles and editorials in regional newspapers, and King 5 and CNN TV stories, emphasizing the economic impact this is generating for local businesses.

Sanitary Shellfish Emphasis Patrol: Officers worked sanitary shellfish during the night tides last week, resulting in an array of criminal activity, including the apprehension of a suspect in a stolen vehicle, the recovery of over \$1,000 worth of stolen property in a separate case that involved a foot pursuit to apprehend the suspects, minors in possession of alcohol, narcotics violations, trespass, etc. Of course, mixed in with these contacts, were numerous commercial shellfish harvest contacts and recreational shellfish violations.

WORK WITH TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES ARE ACHIEVED.

Shellfish Disease Control: The WDFW and the Lummi Tribe secured an agreement for defined protocols governing Lummi shellfish hatchery operations designed to prevent the introduction and spread of shellfish diseases, pests and predators. This is the first state-tribal agreement addressing this topic and jurisdictional issues pertaining to treaty rights controlling shellfish transfer off-reservation dominated the negotiations. The tribe agreed to incorporate practices currently adopted by WDFW as an interim measure to restore hatchery operations. Other states, including Alaska and California, have been attentive to WDFW's approach with the Lummi Tribe since actions taken by the tribe have direct impacts to shellfish imports and exports out of state. A more comprehensive shellfish disease control agreement is anticipated with all Puget Sound tribes and areas impacted by transfer of shellfish.

North of Falcon 2005 - Scheduling: State and Northwest tribal representatives have developed a schedule for the 2005 North of Falcon fisheries planning process that includes public meetings and state-tribal technical and policy sessions. The annual planning process begins March 1, 2005, in Olympia, with public presentation of salmon run-size forecasts and is completed with a full week of meetings held in Tacoma to finalize fishery agreements. We expect to have this meeting information available on our North of Falcon website during this month (January).

Planning for Selective Fisheries & Mass Marking: Proposals for 2005 mark-selective fisheries were discussed recently at a meeting of the Pacific Salmon Commission's Selective Fisheries Evaluation Committee held December 13-15 in Olympia. As part of the state-tribal process for considering 2005 selective fisheries, WDFW and Northwest tribal scientists discussed the experience of the Area 5 and 6 chinook selective fisheries "Pilot Project" on December 16. The purpose of these technical sessions is to guide development of mark-selective fishery proposals that will be included in fishery management packages considered during the 2005 North of Falcon process. With the understanding that these mark-selective fisheries are to be implemented only by agreement between the parties, a state-tribal policy meeting will be held on February 3rd to discuss and resolve outstanding technical and policy issues prior to the commencement of the North of Falcon process. Mass marking related meetings with tribal representatives are planned for January 18th (Tulalip Tribes) and for January 21st (Skokomish Tribe).

North Coast Halibut Meeting: IRM staff met with 30 representatives interested in the Neah Bay and La Push recreational halibut fishery including a Makah Tribal Council member. This was the second public meeting held to discuss potential management alternatives designed to improve the fishery in response to the continued erosion of the length of this fishery due to ever increasing angler effort and catch rates. A third meeting to finalize management recommendations is going to be held on February 22nd prior to briefing the Fish and Wildlife Commission in March.

IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF WASHINGTON BY PROVIDING DIVERSE, HIGH QUALITY RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

Coastal Dungeness Crab Season: The long awaited coastal Dungeness crab season began the week of January 10th. Beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, vessels will be allowed to deploy their pots into waters extending from Cape Falcon to the U.S.-Canada border. It is expected that as many as 90,000



pots will be set during the first 48 hours. Crab fishers will be allowed to begin harvesting crab at 12:01 a.m., Saturday, January 15th . This is the latest opening of this fishery since we began keeping records brought about by a late and slow recovery from the annual molt cycle during late summer and early fall.

### GOAL III: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE RECONNECT WITH THOSE INTERESTED IN WASHINGTON'S FISH AND WILDLIFE.

Specialty background license plates approved by Board: The Special License Plate Review Board approved the license plate backgrounds for bald eagle, killer whale, elk, deer, and bear at the December 10, 2004 meeting. This is the second of three steps that are necessary before the plates become a reality. If successfully adopted by the Washington Legislature this session, proceeds will provide much needed funding for wildlife management programs in Washington. These five plates represent three themes: Wild On Washington (bald eagle for wildlife viewing activities); Endangered Wildlife (killer whale for endangered species activities); and Washington's Wildlife (deer, elk and bear for general wildlife management activities). To get to this step, the Department mounted a signature gathering campaign, acquired at least 2,000 signatures per plate, and presented the signatures and \$2,000 per plate to the Department of Licensing for consideration.

### IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF WDFW'S OPERATONAL AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES.

Lands Division Workshop: Approximately 65 people attended the 2-day Lands Division Workshop at Central Washington University in Ellensburg. Among the topics discussed were the Lands Vision and other policy development for WDFW lands (Recreational, Forest Management, Weed Management, Fire Management, Commercial Use) and Wildlife Area Planning. There were also presentations and discussion on "Go Hunt," Landowner Incentives, new Hunter Access Initiatives, domestic Livestock Grazing, and Wildlife Area mapping.